



Uncivilised Genes: Human Evolution and the Urban Paradox by Gustav Milne is out 31 August, priced £12.99, available from Amazon.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Gustav Milne is a leading archaeologist and academic specialising in urban archaeology. He worked as a professional archaeologist with the Museum of London for 20 years before taking up a lectureship at the Institute of Archaeology at University College London. His national community-based coastal archaeology project is featured in the Channel 4 series Britain at Low Tide.

NEW BOOK

Is our prehistoric past the key to eradicating western lifestyle diseases?

UNCIVILISED GENES, REVEALS HOW UNDERSTANDING OUR CAVEMAN BIOLOGY CAN HELP US BUILD A HEALTHIER URBAN FUTURE

Our increasingly urbanised world is suffering from 'sick city syndrome'. An epidemic of fatal lifestyle diseases such as obesity, diabetes, coronary problems and various types of cancer brought on by the mismatch between our 'civilised' way of life and our 'uncivilised' Palaeolithic genetic make-up.

The problem is that society continues to change with remarkable speed, yet anatomically and genetically we remain much as we were thousands of years ago. We cannot change our genes, of course, so the solution – according to Gustav Milne, author of *Uncivilised Genes: Human Evolution and the Urban Paradox* – is to change our modern urban lifestyles, our buildings and even our town plans to better fit our biology. We need to eat and live more like our cavemen ancestors.

Eat like a hunter-gatherer

Our evolving digestive system is designed for fresh foods, not industrially-processed products with additional sugars. Indeed, evidence suggests that the more your diet diverges from a Palaeolithic norm, the shorter your life is likely to be. The ideal diet is rich in vegetables and proteins, and is shaped by the seasons in the same way our hunter-gatherer ancestors' diets were.

Live like a hunter-gatherer

Modern urban homes should be no more than six storeys high, have good natural light, and open out to outdoor spaces such as gardens, balconies or roof terraces. Having access to nature – be it through house plants, pets or being outdoors in gardens and parks – is essential not just for the psychological uplift, but also for the effective working of our ancient immune system.

Get tribal

Human beings are social creatures. We have a fundamental need for smaller, tribally-based communities. Current social challenges, such as

gang violence and the loneliness epidemic, can be traced back to this prehistoric imperative and at least partially resolved through understanding its significance.

Roam free

We need to promote a culture that helps us mimic the more physically active caveman lifestyle to offset the health risks of our increasingly sedentary urban lives.

Our buildings and our town plans need to be reconfigured and 'greened' to better fit our uncivilised biology, and to encourage more people to lead active lives. Such initiatives include:

- Increased pedestrianisation of our town and city centres
- More effective cycle-to-work schemes and safer cycle lanes
- Greater provision of sports fields and allotments
- Better air quality through the banning of diesel and other noxious emissions

A focus on 'greened cities' would also promote 'uncivilised architecture' – homes, schools, hospitals and offices designed in accordance with evolutionary-concordant principles – together with town plans that encourage us to lead more active lives in a greener environment.

Uncivilising our future

Towns may not be our natural habitat, but they can become our optimal one. By changing our personal and institutional behaviour and ensuring that we plan and grow our urban environment so that towns and cities fit better with the needs of our genetic makeup, we can better contain the western lifestyle disease epidemic. We need to learn the lessons of a proven prehistoric past and build a healthier urban future.

EXCLUSIVE ARTICLES AND INTERVIEWS AVAILABLE:



Gustav Milne

Gustav Milne is a specialist on our historical origins and the implications for the way we need to shape our future. He is available to provide expert comment, interviews and by-lined articles on a number of topics, including:

Back to the future - why we need to eat, sleep, and work like hunter-gatherers

Healthy habitats: why modern urban planning needs to get prehistoric

Parks, pets and why we are genetically hardwired to need rooms with a view

The missing link: our prehistoric past holds the answer to modern urban challenges

A prehistoric take on managing our mental health

How getting in touch with our Palaeolithic roots is good for business